

Fall 2005 Legislative Update

Representative Jim Dunn



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Fall 2005

Dear Neighbors,

I hope this newsletter finds you well and that you've had an enjoyable summer with your family and friends.

I thought this would be a good time to touch base with you to reflect on the legislative session that ended in late April – and look forward to the rest of the year and into 2006.

The 2005 legislative was the most difficult one I've experienced as your state representative – and must have been hard to endure for any legislator who is of the moderate or conservative political persuasion. What we saw were many pieces of bad legislation at the direction of the **tax-and-spend liberal** base in the Legislature which has **pushed its agenda on the state** since becoming the majority in the House and Senate.

While the 2005 legislative session was a disappointing one overall, we did take some small steps forward in **election reform**, **supporting some local public works projects**, and **improving our public schools' aging infrastructure**. I remain hopeful the 2006 legislative session will provide better results for our state.

I'd like to thank all of you who have contacted me with your comments, concerns and questions this year. **Your input is valuable** and I consider our interactions to be the most important part of my job.

I enjoy being your state representative – **it's an honor and privilege to serve you**. Please contact me if I can ever be of assistance.

Respectfully,

Jim Dunn
State Representative, 17th District



HOUSE COMMITTEES:
Children & Family Services

Economic Development,
Agriculture & Trade

Higher Education

Housing
Assistant Ranking Republican

STATE COMMITTEES:
Economic Development &
Trade Work Group

Family Policy Council

Lewis & Clark Bicentennial
Advisory Committee

Tourism Advisory Committee

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Representative Jim Dunn

DISTRICT 17

A tax-filled, unsustainable state operating budget

Every two years the Legislature must pass a state operating budget. This budget uses your tax dollars and other state revenues to help pay for public schools, higher education, human services, government and judicial operations, natural resources, and other things.

This budget cycle, in the 2005 Legislature, we had **\$1.7 billion more in new revenue** to spend than in 2003. This offered us an opportunity to **pass a balanced budget without raising taxes**.

In fact, **conservatives proposed a no-new-taxes budget** that would have fully funded both I-728 (smaller class sizes) and I-732 (cost of living for school employees), but it was never considered by the majority party.

Instead, **tax-and-spend liberals controlled the process** and put aside pension payment obligations, took from dedicated accounts, shifted money around, and increased taxes on cigarettes, liquor, gasoline, and some families who lose a loved one. When added up, the end result is a **12.4 percent increase in state spending**.

I voted against this budget because it relies on tax increases, one-time fixes, and is **unsustainable** in the future – something our governor even acknowledged. In two years, we will likely have a **large budget shortfall**.

Our budget is tied to our economic vitality – and this year our state **took a big step backward**.



Students of Hearthwood Elementary meet with Jim

Increase in gas tax hurts consumers, economy

A tax-and-spend liberal-driven package that will **generate around \$8.5 billion in new revenue** for transportation projects passed on the last day of the legislative session.

The revenue will be generated through a **9.5-cent tax increase on gas** phased in over four years, which began in July 2005, in addition to **increases in certain fees**. A majority of the funding will go to the Seattle area.

This was an easy **“no” vote for me**, as are most tax increases. State government needs to learn how to live within its means – especially at a time when many **people can’t afford already high gas prices**. It’s important to note that our state already has one of the highest gas taxes in the nation.

While I sympathize with the Seattle area’s problem of an aging infrastructure, I believe **local problems should begin with local – and practical – solutions**. We could also use more leadership from our federal senators and representatives on this issue.



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Addressing our health care crisis

There are still too many of our family and friends who either cannot obtain health insurance – or cannot afford coverage. Not enough was done in the 2005 legislative session to address this crisis.

The only action the Legislature took was to pass a few **prescription drugs bills that sounded good, but in reality accomplish very little**. These measures will unlikely result in any savings for consumers and are based on the false assumption that Canada wants to be our drugstore.

We need **market-based solutions** – not new government programs – to address our health care crisis. If we are going to fully address the problems that are driving our health care costs, we need to:

- **Prioritize and eliminate some of our costly state health care insurance mandates** that drive up costs for everyone, including small employers.
- Offer **health savings accounts** to families so they can stretch their health care dollars.
- Allow insurance companies to provide **health care policies tailored to the needs of individuals and families** – and have reflective costs.
- Enact **meaningful regulatory reforms** that **foster competition** and allow for a stable health insurance market.
- Eliminate state taxes on the health care industry.



17th District needs the Nonresident Income Tax Freedom Act

I sponsored a measure in the 2005 legislative session that would have asked the federal government to help provide tax relief to Washington citizens who work in Oregon and are forced to pay an income tax for that state.

Unfortunately, my measure was not allowed out of the House Finance Committee.

House Joint Resolution 4022 requested that Congress and President Bush pass the **Nonresident Income Tax Freedom Act**. This act would amend Title 4 of the United States Code to prohibit a state from imposing a discriminatory tax on income earned within such state by nonresidents of such state.

I've been an advocate for taxpayers on this issue for over a decade. Income tax has long been a controversial issue with Washington commuters who don't think it's fair they must pay thousands of dollars per year to Oregon and Idaho that – in turn – offer them no say in how the money is spent.

This issue has a big impact on Clark County, which has thousands of residents who cross the Columbia River each day to work in Oregon. How can we expect these hard-working folks to endure this tax burden?

This is about **equity** and it's time to **end this onerous tax disparity**.

Allowing our small employers to thrive

We need to make it easier for all employers – especially small ones – to grow their businesses and hire workers.

An important first step is reforming state government. If applied correctly, we can reform state government in a way that does not compromise worker health and safety, nor harm the environment.

We can start by **eliminating duplicate state regulations and streamlining** others. Fewer regulations on employers allow them more time and resources to invest in their products and services. **The end result is more jobs.**

The bottom line is state government must be run as efficiently as possible. Your tax dollars need to be spent wisely.

Like this past legislative session, in 2006 I'll support:

- **Reining in regulatory taxes on workers' compensation** and other programs.
- **Reforming the state's rulemaking process** to ensure more accountability within government agencies.
- Extending **tax incentives for start-ups and small employers.**



Staying in touch with you

In order to be your voice in Olympia, it's important we stay in touch and that I'm able to hear your thoughts on issues facing our district.

One way of staying in touch – in addition to newsletters like this one – is through e-mail legislative updates. **If you are interested in receiving my e-mail updates, please send me your e-mail address (see below).**

If you ever have any questions, comments, or concerns, you can visit my website at **<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/dunn.htm>** and click on "Feedback." Or feel free to call me at **(360) 786-7994**.

Your name: _____

Your e-mail address: _____

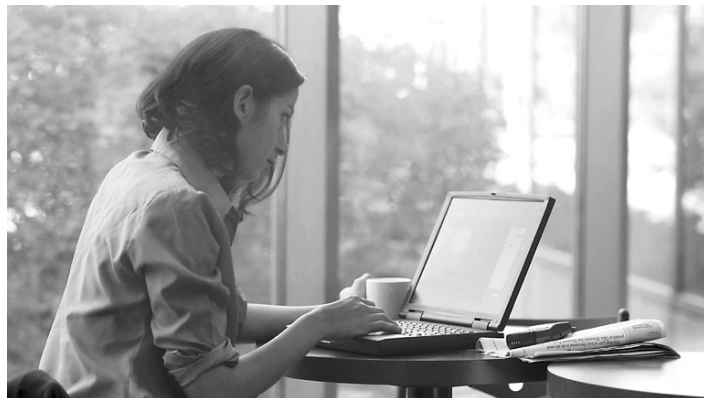
Resources on the Internet

If you need information about state government, you may find the following Internet sites to be great resources. Or you can always call or e-mail my office.

access.wa.gov – provides access to state agency services, including applying for unemployment benefits, renewing car tabs, and much more.

leg.wa.gov – offers committee meeting schedules and nearly everything else you'd want to know about the Legislature.

hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/dunn/pressroom.htm – offers my views and news releases on various issues.



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